



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

20 October 2019

TONE 1 / Eothinon 7—*Greatmartyr Artemius at Antioch (362). Righteous Child Artemius of Verkola. Ven. Gerasimos the New Ascetic, of Cephalonia (1579). Ven. Matrona of Chios (14th c.).*

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! (R:) Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (R:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and has girt Himself! (R:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! For He has established the world which shall not be shaken! (R:) Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ!
Save us, O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, as we sing to Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF RESURRECTION (Tone 1): While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

TROPARION OF ST. ARTEMIUS THE GREAT (Tone 4): Thy Martyr, O Lord, in his courageous contest for Thee * received as the prize the crowns of incorruption and life from Thee, our immortal God. * For since he possessed Thy strength, he cast down the tyrants * and wholly destroyed the demons' strengthless presumption. * O Christ God, by his prayers, save our souls, since Thou art merciful.

TROPARION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 9:6-11) **Brethren, this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.**

Saint Paul was not only an apostle, the early Church's most effective missionary, a loving spiritual father and guide to so many, and a man blessed to have heavenly visions and revelations from the Lord; he was also a very practical person. Although he preached about the Church as a mystical, divine-human reality—"the body of Christ"—he also knew that the survival of the early Christian communities depended in significant measure on good stewardship of their earthly resources. Indeed, money is always part of what makes any human institution work; and the holy Apostle was a very good organizer on this front. We would do well to listen to his words.

Saint Paul assumes we already know that the model for everything we are called to do is God. God is abundantly rich and abundantly generous, and He shares his gifts with creation freely, **not grudgingly, nor out of any necessity.** The love that God is *in Himself*, as relation between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, overflows towards creation, so that we experience God as Giver and as Gift. This is why Orthodox theology speaks about the *personal* character of our relation to God (He is the Giver) and about how God's interaction with us is experienced concretely as *divine energies* (He is also the Gift).

What, then, about money and other resources? **He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** "Sowing bountifully" is true of God first. And it must become true of the Church, as a whole, and of every disciple of Christ, individually. Imitate God by *giving*.

God loves a cheerful giver. Giving is God's manner of existence; naturally, then, *it is good to give.* To us, *giving* is part of healing our terrible state of separation from God. Therefore, we should realize that giving is, first of all, an opportunity for us. Giving is first of all good *for us!* Why? Because it returns us to the pattern of existence that God Himself has inscribed in us from the beginning. And since by giving we are returning to our proper "functioning" as sons and daughters of God, let us *be cheerful in giving.*

Saint Paul goes on to quote from Psalm 112: **"He has given to the poor, His righteousness endures forever."** Again, the first one to fit the description is God. But the Psalm is a recommendation for us: if

you want “righteousness” (the kind of intimacy with God that befits a human being), then *practice giving*.

Finally, the Apostle assures us, God is not standing by and watching from a distance: as you give, rest assured that He will supply you with **sufficiency in all things, that you may have an abundance for every good work**. And what is more, He will also **increase the fruits of your righteousness**. In other words, as we practice God’s generous mode of existence, God is at work in us, transforming us. With every act by which we extend ourselves to others, we are being renewed and made *ever more capable* of tasting God’s grace and sharing it with others.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 8:26-39) At that time, as Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, Return home, and declare how much God has done for you. And he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

A recent saint (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, d. 1956) wrote that "God teaches not only through the sky, filled with angels and adorned with stars, or through the earth, all covered with the media of God's created beings, *but even through the demons*." Indeed, Christ allowed the demons to show us vividly just what is at stake in the Gospel's call to repentance and life with God.

At the very beginning, we learn that of a man living a tormented existence “wearing no clothes, and not in a house but among the tombs”: a “dead life,” haunted by nightmarish frights. The man was out of his mind: his mind, that is, was the playground of a legion of spirits; and, just as sleepwalkers play out their dreams by moving about physically, at the risk of gravely injuring themselves, so also was this man’s body wounded by being dragged along as the demons were harassing his spirit. This is indeed disturbing to any reader or hearer of the Gospel, because we have here an appropriate image of the fallen existence that Adam chose by trusting the evil one rather than God.

When the Lord meets him and heals him, he decides to bring the evil out in a spectacular display, so that people see and understand the extent of this man’s torment: he sends the legion of demons into a herd of swine. The resulting stampede, with the swine rushing headlong off a cliff to a miserable drowning, gives us frightening insight into the kind of dark and destructive force

had been ravaging the man from Gadara. The account is frightening, especially bearing in mind that, according to Scripture, “the world lies under the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).

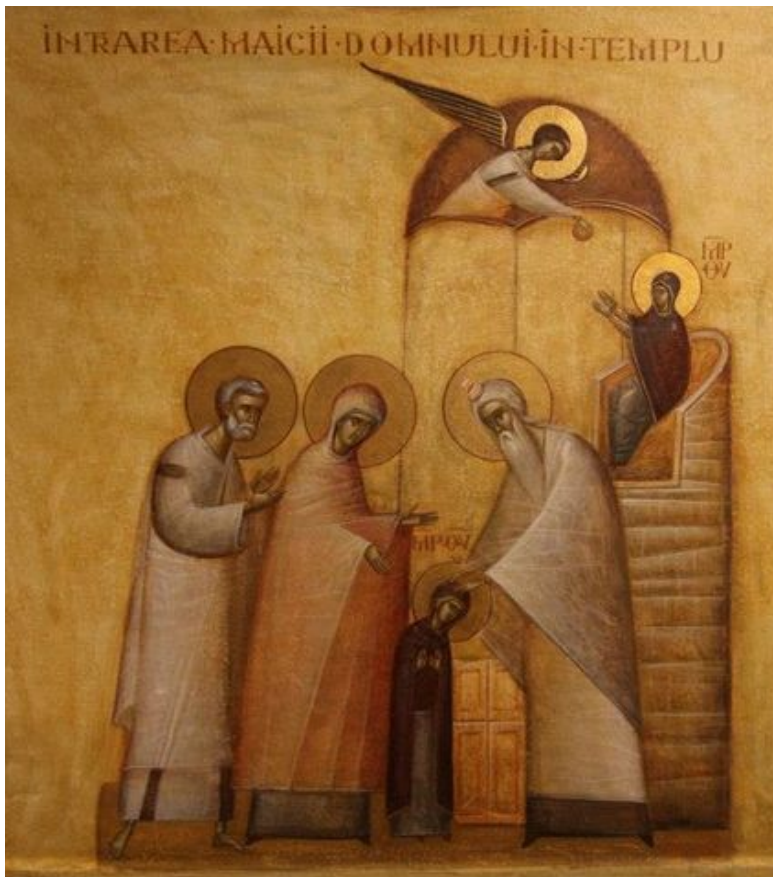
Most frightening, however, is what follows after the demons are banished and the man restored to health. Instead of giving thanks for the healing and perhaps throwing a feast, the Gadarenes are “seized with great fear” and ask Jesus to leave the area at once! They are afraid, indeed, but not of the demons. They are afraid, rather, of God coming into their lives and into their homes, to disrupt the status quo by bringing in a new kind of life.

The Gadarenes are in grave danger: worse than not recognizing the presence of God in their lives, they actually *do* understand that God is visiting them—but they chase him away. And this, in turn, sets them on a slippery slope leading them to soon share the fate of their countryman, whom the Lord has just delivered from his torment.

But we can be on the very same dangerous slippery slope. Even if we don’t raise pigs, when we fall into an existence with no other horizon than *acquisition* and *possession*—of wealth, power, pleasure, etc—then we, too, are “**in the country of the Gadarenes.**” Greed leads to spiritual blindness, and that blindness leads to slavery; and, once enslaved to pure materialism, we are unable to discern the insidious activity of the evil powers.

Today’s Gospel makes it clear that the choice we are given in our life is a deadly serious one. God or a legion of demons; being enslaved and harassed by evil, or healed by the Savior of all mankind. Let us leave our tombs and run to Christ, heeding the call that has gone out to us: “With fear of God, faith, and love *draw near!*”

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Sunday, November 3
12:30 to 1:30 pm

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

Mary:
Presenting Ourselves as a Temple

Presentation by Deacon Martin,
followed by Q&A